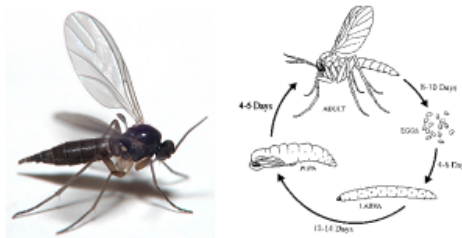




Forward Thinking Pest Control

**Technical Bulletin: Fungus Gnats in Potted Plants**



**OVERVIEW:** These pests are part of the Scaridae family and are not a biting species. If complaints of bites arise it is usually associated with static electricity or the assumption that all flying insects bite. They are quite common in offices where plants are found and it is due to poor plant maintenance (over + under watering). They gravitate toward windows, attracted by sunlight, but may also fly about desks.

**CONTROL MEASURES:** There are several Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approaches to solving this problem. The top 4" of potted plants should be layered with 2" of play sand then on top of that 2" of small (3/4" or larger) decorative stones. This allows water to flow through and water the plant but will dry significantly faster than soil. This prevents the Fungus Gnat from laying eggs in the moist soil and is a completely organic approach.

The other option for existing infestations is to use bacillus thuringiensis israelensis (BTI) which is a biological product that controls gnats. It is sold at most home and garden type stores and can be found on the internet under several brand names. The product is added when watering plants and controls the larval stage by disrupting the life cycle and preventing maturity to the adult stage. Another version is "BTI Bits" by Summit Chemical and it is applied via shaker bottle over the top of the soil and is watered into the roots. The product does not work immediately (10-14 days) and has a short residual life so it may need to be applied repeatedly over a few weeks to achieve control. For larger commercial planters, this product can be professionally applied by the horticulturalist firm during normal service intervals.

Ultra-Low-Volume (ULV) AKA "fogging" applications will yield limited very short term results because it does not affect the immature stages only adults. Insect Light Traps (ILT's) may only sporadically trap adult activity but can minimize some of the nuisance.

*George E. Williams Jr., A.C.E.  
Staff Entomologist*



Environmental Health Services, Inc.  
823 Pleasant Street Norwood, MA 02062  
Main 781.769.9111 Fax 781.769.1115  
Toll Free 888.PEST.MGMT www.ehspest.com